

TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR

FIRST SELECTMAN JASON E. BOWSA

March 25, 2022

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 467, *An Act Extending Permitting Remote Public Meetings Under the Freedom of Information Act Through December 31, 2022*.

The ability to conduct public meetings remotely during the COVID-19 emergency has been critical to allow the continuity of government at the local level. It has allowed for public access to government meetings while keeping participants and observers safe.

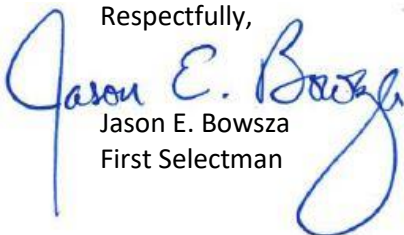
I would ask that the committee consider eliminating the sunset date of December 31, 2022, included in the bill. Allowing meetings to take place in an interactive virtual or hybrid way allows an additional layer of transparency to the government process that I believe is in concert with the intention of the Freedom of Information Act.

In my community, when virtual meetings became necessary due to the pandemic, we saw new members of the public participating in virtual meetings – people who may have been unable to attend in person but were able to join remotely. In fact, many parents of young children have difficulty leaving the house at night due to parental responsibilities, but through the utilization of hybrid/virtual meetings, they can be more active participants in the democratic process.

While (we all hope) the pandemic is coming to an end, certain responsive elements to it will linger. Zoom, Teams and GoToMeeting are all here to stay. Allowing those platforms to be utilized to conduct public business can benefit from their permanent integration.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Jason E. Bowsza
First Selectman